

JACQUES CARTIER

The French entered the Age of Exploration in the early sixteenth century. Like the other nations of Europe, France was interested in finding an all-water route to the East. In 1534, King Francis I sent Jacques Cartier to the New World. His mission was to find the Northwest Passage. The Northwest Passage was widely believed to be a water route through Canada to China. It did not exist, but the countries of Europe spent much time, money, and energy trying to find it.

Jacques Cartier was born in St. Malo, France. He became an expert sailor and navigator. On May 6, 1534, he sailed for North America with three ships and 61 men. Landing in Newfoundland, his men made a 30-foot cross of wood and planted it in the sand. Cartier thus claimed Canada for France.

Cartier made a second trip to Canada in 1535. This time he discovered the St. Lawrence River. Thinking that this mighty river led to Indian civilizations as rich as those in Mexico and Peru, he sailed up it as far as the Indian village of Hochelaga. (Hochelaga would later become the city of Montreal.) Here he found the Iroquois Indians to be friendly and courteous. The French offered to share their hardtack and red wine with their new friends. The Indians refused, thinking the French were eating wood and drinking blood!

The winter of 1535 had set in, and Cartier was unable to return to France. He and his men were forced to stay the winter with the Iroquois at Hochelaga. Because they lacked fresh fruits and vegetables, many of the Frenchmen died of scurvy. It is interesting to note that those who accepted and drank the Indian cure for scurvy recovered. The Iroquois had learned to make a brew from the branches of the hemlock tree that apparently cured this disease.

Cartier returned to France with samples of what he thought was gold. What he really had carried back was "false gold." This was probably either copper or iron pyrite. Pyrite is a combination of iron and sulfur that has a yellowish color.

King Francis I sent Cartier back to Canada for a third time in 1541. This time he was to set up a permanent French settlement. He succeeded, but the colony lasted only a year.

Cartier never found any gold in New France, as the French Empire came to be called. Nor did he find the Northwest Passage. For his efforts, however, Francis I made him an admiral in the French navy.

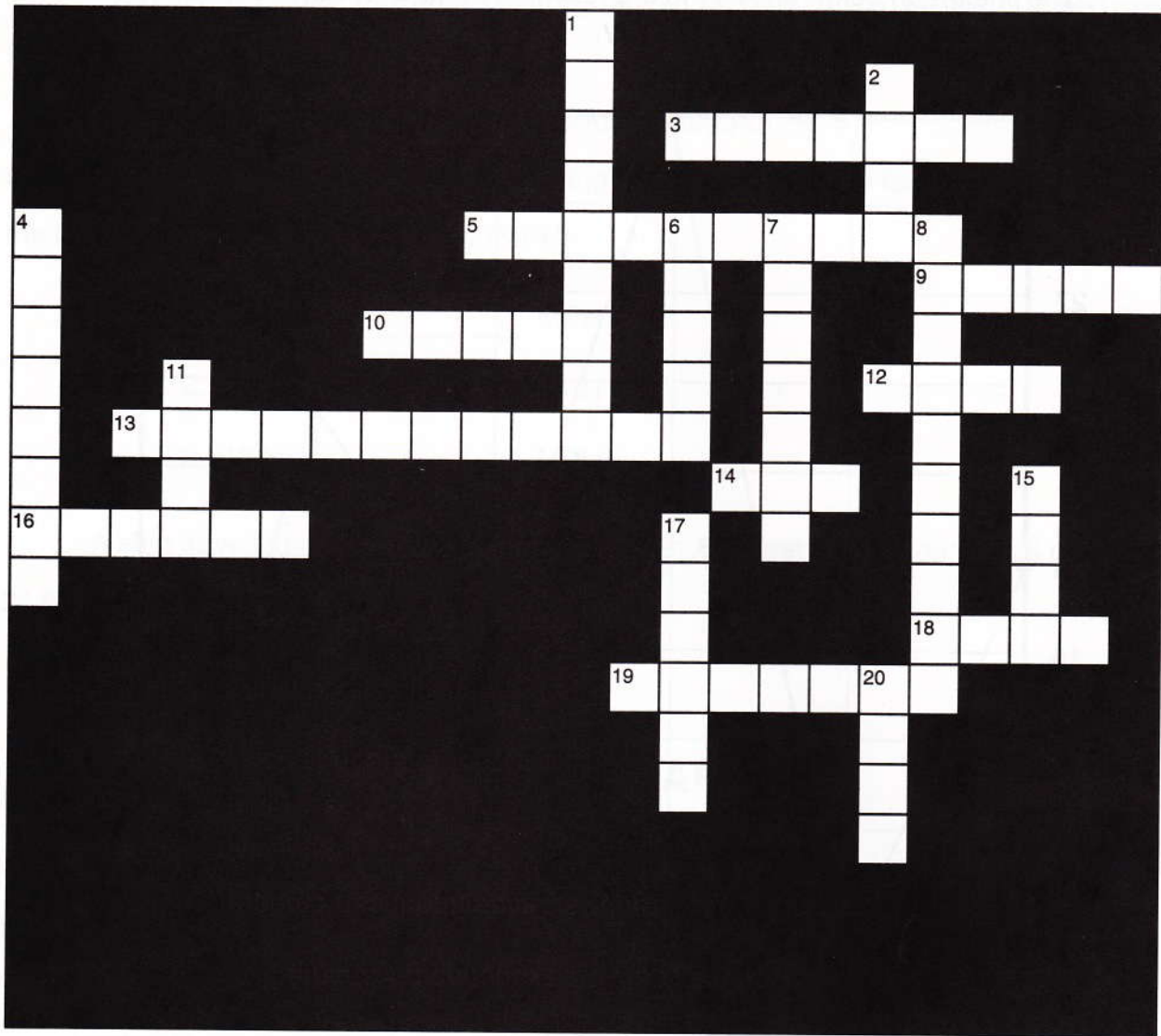
Why were Cartier's explorations important? A look at a map will give you the answer. The St. Lawrence River proved to be the gateway to the continent. It led to the Great Lakes and to the interior of North America. From here the French would fan out and establish the fur trade that brought great wealth to their country.



Name _____ Date _____

JACQUES CARTIER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the clues below and information from the narrative to complete the puzzle.

**ACROSS**

3. Jacques _____.
 5. The St. Lawrence leads to these (two words).
 9. Number of trips to the New World made by Cartier.
 10. Where the Northwest Passage was supposed to lead to.
 12. St. _____, Cartier's birthplace.
 13. Cartier landed here in 1534.
 14. Month when Cartier set sail on his first voyage.
 16. Disease caused by the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables.
 18. What Montreal is.
 19. Northwest _____.

DOWN

1. Iroquois village.
 2. What the French drank.
 4. King _____ of France.
 6. Cartier made his _____ trip to Canada in 1541.
 7. Naval rank given to Cartier.
 8. River discovered by Cartier.
 11. Cartier's settlement lasted one _____.
 15. North _____ Passage.
 17. Cartier claimed this land for France.
 20. Cartier found false _____.